

*This is the third in a series of planning updates on the revision of the comprehensive conservation plan for the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. The revised plan will guide management of the Togiak Refuge for the next 10-15 years.*

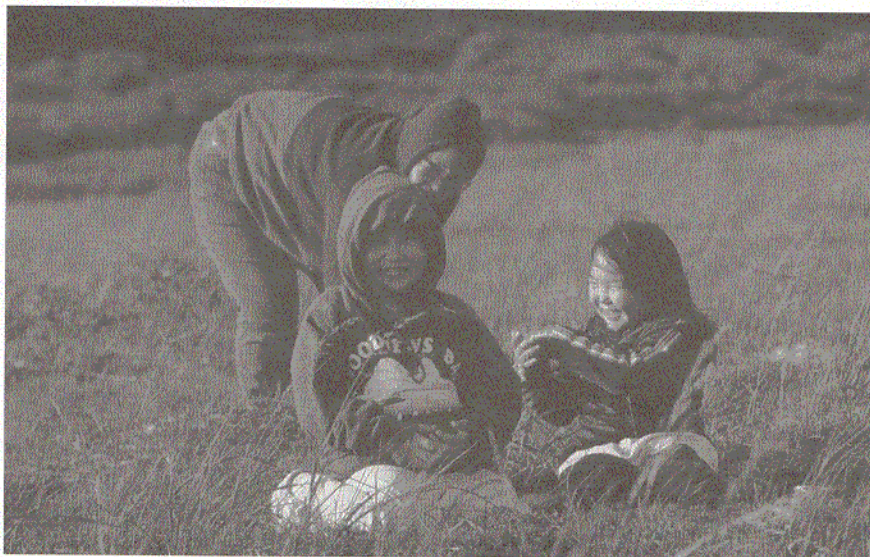
## Where we are now

Our Spring 2001 Update described the main issues we will address as we revise the Togiak Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Since then, the planning team (which includes representatives from the Fish and Wildlife Service, two state agencies, and five local villages) developed several preliminary management alternatives. These represent different ways the Refuge and its management partners could deal with the planning issues.

During team meetings a number of actions were identified the Refuge could take regardless of which alternative is eventually adopted. These activities, which we refer to as "Actions Common to all Alternatives" are listed on p 3.

Many Refuge management activities are working fine now so there's no reason to change them. These activities include

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update *Fall 2001*



*Goodnews Bay berry picking helpers.*

USFWS

the hiring of local residents to serve as links between the Refuge and local communities (the RIT program), and continuing to monitor trends in fish and wildlife populations and habitat. The State of Alaska manages fish and wildlife, adapting its regulations as needed.

The main purpose of this update is to acquaint more people with the preliminary alternatives and to get your reactions to them. What do you like and not like? What have we forgotten? Have we considered a reasonable range

of ways to direct the Refuge's management over the next 10-15 years? Which actions in the alternatives are most likely to

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help the Refuge achieve its purposes? Because the alternatives may change, it's a little early to choose a favorite, but we would like to know if you have any concerns that you feel should be analyzed. The information contained in the preliminary alternatives is a bit uneven---some are very detailed while others are very general---but we wanted to share them with a broad audience before going any further.

For your convenience, we have included an addressed mail-back response sheet for you to give us your comments. If you'd rather call, email, or write your own letter, please do so. For more information on the issues, the planning team, or the Togiak Refuge, please contact us or go to our planning web site at [www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html](http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html) Your comments will be most helpful if they reach us by **December 17, 2001.**



### What happens next

After we receive your comments, we will present them to the planning team and revise the preliminary

### Purposes of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge

*(established in Section 303(6)(B) of ANILCA)*  
include:

(i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, salmonids, marine birds and mammals, migratory birds and large mammals (including their restoration to historic levels);

(ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;

(iii) to provide, in a manner consistent with purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents; and

(iv) to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with purposes set forth in subparagraph (i), water quality and necessary quantity within the refuge.

alternatives. We will then analyze the social, economic, and environmental effects of the revised alternatives. In order to adequately analyze the alternatives, we will need to pull together a large amount of information. We then will publish a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), currently scheduled for about a year from now. The Draft EIS will describe the impacts expected from each alternative and will identify the agency's preferred alternative.

Once the Draft EIS is published we will have public meetings in the villages near the Refuge and elsewhere. Everyone who receives this newsletter will have the opportunity to request a copy of the EIS or a summary. The EIS will have a minimum 90-day comment period to give people time to prepare thoughtful



*The planning team poses in front of the preliminary alternatives, still happy despite having spent two days in planning meetings.*



comments. We then take all of the comments received, incorporate them as needed, and publish a final EIS and plan. We plan to publish more of these Updates along the way to keep people informed of our progress.

### **Actions common to all alternatives**

*As mentioned on p. 1, these are actions the Service could pursue no matter what direction is taken in managing the Togiak Refuge.*

- To ensure that quality opportunities for recreational use and subsistence use continue to be available on the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Togiak Rivers, establish a program to monitor indicators of recreation and subsistence quality. If monitoring suggests that standards are at risk of being exceeded, additional management action is taken. Actions could range from site hardening, to regulations, to working with the State to limit use levels, depending on the cause of the risk or the impact. Work with landowners along the lower rivers to study crowding and explore possible solutions.
- Recommend to the State of Alaska that appropriate horsepower limits be established for the Goodnews



*Togiak Refuge staff contact visitors throughout the summer season.* USFWS

River (including all forks). This could include recommendations that the Alaska Department of Natural Resources create a Special Use Area with horsepower limits on all forks of the Goodnews. The objective would be to reduce the risk of collisions in these narrow river corridors that have many blind curves. There have been potentially fatal accidents and many close calls in recent years.

- Seek ways to encourage compliance with State regulations on the Togiak Refuge (such as the three-day camping limit). Currently, some people ignore the law even when informed about it by Fish and Wildlife Service personnel.
- To minimize disturbance of hauled out walrus, recommend that State of

Alaska prohibit removal of ivory from beaches in the Cape Peirce area (similar to the regulation in place on Round Island). One possibility would be to pursue State designation of the tidelands as Critical Habitat Area, Sanctuary, or Game Refuge. (Ivory collected by the Service from the Refuge is made available for sale to registered buyers and Alaskan Natives.)

- Increase water quality monitoring, improve education on waste disposal, and work to increase compliance with State, Refuge, and Native Corporation policies regarding disposal of solid human waste on the main rivers and uplands. Require visitors to practice "Leave No Trace" behaviors on Refuge lands.

*(continued on p. 6)*

This table describes how each alternative would address each of the issues. These will be revised based on public comments received. We can add new actions or rearrange the table as needed.

|  | Water Quality  | Non-Guided Use on Upper Kanektok, Upper Goodnews, and Upper Togiak Rivers   | Camping Opportunities on the Lower Kanektok  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Alternative A</b><br>(current management) | Bury waste on upper rivers (use of portable toilets is voluntary); carry out waste on lower rivers (honey buckets previously provided for lower Kanektok); outhouses at Kagati and Goodnews Lakes.                                       | No limits on non-guided use. Reexamine capacities and allocations when non-guided use reaches approximately the level of guided use.  | No improvements except outhouses at Kagati and Goodnews lakes. Alaska DNR limits camping on shorelands to 3 days for all users. Camping on lower river uplands requires permit from the landowner. |
| <b>Alternative B</b>                         | Require all float groups to carry out solid human waste on the Kanektok (perhaps with user fee). When DEC approved disposal sites are available.   | <b>Upper Kanektok</b> - require permits for all non-guided users. <b>Allow</b> no more than one non-guided start from lake every other day for whole use season. Allocate permits via a reservation system. <b>Upper Goodnews</b> - Limit non-guided use to current levels. <b>Upper Togiak</b> - monitor non-guided use - no limits at this time | No improvements except outhouses at Kagati and Goodnews lakes. Alaska DNR limits camping on shorelands to 3 days for all users. Camping on lower river uplands requires permit from the landowner  |
| <b>Alternative C</b>                         | Require all float groups to carry out solid human waste on the Kanektok now and on the other rivers when DEC-approved disposal sites are available (perhaps with user fee).  | During king salmon season (June 25 - July 15) and silver salmon season (Aug 10 to Sept 7), require permits for all non-guided users. Allocate a limited number of permits via a reservation system. No limits on non-guided use the rest of the season.   | DNR changes the camping limits to 7 nights on the lower Kanektok for non-commercial users only.<br><br>Commercial camps are still limited to 3 nights on the entire river.                         |
| <b>Alternative D</b>                         | Install outhouses/waste facilities at key locations on Refuge lands or on easements acquired for that purpose. Specify type of facilities and either the exact locations or the criteria for locating them and a target number of sites. | No limits on non-guided use at this time but require permit from the Togiak Refuge during the entire use season. No limit on number of permits available. Encourage launches when use is lower and provide information to help groups plan.   | DNR changes the camping limits to 10 nights on the lower Kanektok for non-commercial users only.<br><br>Commercial camps are still limited to 3 nights on the entire river.                        |

| Commercial Guiding on Refuge - Goodnews Forks  | Commercial Guiding on Refuge - Togiak Tributaries  | Public Use at Cape Peirce Wildlife Viewing Area   | Recommendations for Wild and Scenic River and Wilderness Designation   |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>North Fork</b> - 1 motorboat base camp authorized (not used since 1991); 4 additional motorboat trips per year from lower river; 7 guided float trips annually.</p> <p><b>Middle Fork</b> - 1 motorized base camp with 282 use days authorized; no guided float trips.</p>   | <p>Three use zones established at Kashaia Creek, Kemuk River, and Ongivinuk River. Guides authorized for maximum of two boats and 8 people per zone. Boat storage site authorized in each zone. One guided motorboat trip per day from lower Togiak River authorized. One guided float trip per week authorized.</p> | <p>Use is limited to six people per day, and permits are required. Designated trails and camping areas, planned observation blinds, public use cabin, outhouse. Permits for all visitors are issued on a first-come, first-served basis; no allocation between guided and non-guided use.</p> | <p>0 rivers (Upper Kanektok was previously studied but found not suitable)</p> <p>Existing Wilderness recommendation (334,000 acres at Cape Peirce/Cape Newenham and in South Fork and Middle Fork Goodnews area.</p> <p>(see map p. 10)</p> |
| <p><b>North Fork</b> - No motorboat base camp on North Fork; 4 additional motorboat trips per year from lower river; 7 guided float trips annually.</p> <p><b>Middle Fork</b> - 1 motorized base camp with 282 use days authorized; no guided float trips.</p>   | <p>Manage all Togiak tributaries to maintain a self-reliant, adventurous, low-use wilderness experience (where opportunities for guiding would not be allowed and limits would be established for non-guided users).</p>   | <p>Develop structured program with designated viewing areas, led and managed by concessionaire or Fish and Wildlife Service. Could vary: the number of people or flights allowed at one time; the permit time period (permits could be for more than one day); and fees.</p>                  | <p>The entire Kanektok and Arolik</p> <p>Existing Wilderness recommendation <b>plus</b> the Osviak/Matogak, Arolik, and Oyak Creek review units from the original CCP.</p> <p>(see map p. 10)</p>  |
| <p><b>North Fork</b> - No motorboat base camp on North Fork; one guided motorboat trip per day from the lower river.</p> <p><b>Middle Fork</b> - 1 motorized base camp with 282 use days authorized; 2 guided float trips per week on Goodnews (guides could use <b>either</b> Fork); no additional guided motorboat trips from lower river.</p> | <p>Manage all Togiak tributaries to maintain a self-reliant, adventurous, low-use wilderness experience (where opportunities for guiding would not be allowed and limits would be established for non-guided users).</p>   | <p>Develop structured program with designated viewing areas, led and managed by concessionaire or Fish and Wildlife Service. Could vary: the number of people or flights allowed at one time; the permit time period (permits could be for more than one day); and fees.</p>                  | <p>Trail Creek, North Fork Goodnews River, Kemuk River, Ongivinuk River, Upper Togiak River, Upper Kanektok River</p> <p>All eligible acres recommended for wilderness.</p> <p>(see map p. 11)</p>   |
| <p><b>North Fork</b> - 1 motorboat base camp authorized; 1 motorboat trip per day from the lower river; can also drop off raft group every 2 weeks; allow 1 float trip to start every other day</p> <p><b>Middle Fork</b> - 1 motorized base camp with 282 use days authorized; 1 float trip every other week.</p>                               | <p>Divide the Kemuk zone into two and authorize maximum of three boats and 8 people per zone. Two guided motorboat trips per day authorized from the lower river. One guided float trip per week on the Ongivinuk and one per week on the Pungokepuk (small group sizes).</p>  | <p>Same as current but establish a system to allocate a proportion of total use allowed at Cape Peirce to guides and a system to award permits competitively to guiding businesses.</p>   | <p>0 rivers, 0 acres Recommended</p> <p>(see map p. 11)</p>  |



## Actions Common to all Alternatives (cont.)

- Encourage anglers to avoid unnecessary impacts to fish populations (how to minimize damage to spawning areas; proper catch and release; disinfecting gear). Monitor fishing and adjust regulations as needed through a cooperative state-federal effort. Collect additional information on anglers and knowledge/practice of catch and release on Refuge rivers. Support Quinhagak cultural program visits to sport fish camps as one way to inform non-local anglers about local culture and customs.
- Work cooperatively with the villages and State to identify sensitive habitat areas (spawning beds), any threats to them, and ways to protect them. If needed, consider submitting or supporting proposals for protection measures to the State Board of Fisheries. Identify and map sensitive wildlife areas (such as caribou calving grounds, bald eagle nests, bear feeding areas) and consider limiting access or taking other measures as needed.
- Develop a competitive prospectus system for awarding commercial guiding permits to operate on the Goodnews, similar to the

system that exists on other Togiak Refuge waters.

- Inform float and motorized groups about motorboat behavior (such as the need to get on step to navigate some stretches). Work with guides to voluntarily reduce motorboat use on upper rivers (such as the number of trips each boat makes up and down river in a day of fishing) to reduce conflicts with subsistence users on weekends. Work with all users to improve etiquette.
- Promote proper food handling and storage techniques to minimize bear encounters and habituation. Monitor and document the extent and timing of the problem; if needed, consider changes in special use permits or proposals to State Boards of Fisheries and Game to alter seasons or timing of sport use to reduce game displacement, conflicts with subsistence use, and bear-human conflicts.
- Establish a new seasonal position at Cape Peirce to monitor and control public use. Attend herring spotting meetings every year to present information about conservation of marine mammals and other species.

## Subsistence Study Update

During the spring and early summer, the Refuge supported a study of subsistence uses and conflicts on the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Togiak Rivers. Joan Kluwe, a long-time Alaska resident and Ph.D. student at the University of Idaho, spent many days in Quinhagak, Goodnews Bay, Togiak, and Dillingham interviewing people familiar with subsistence use on the rivers.

Most of the 42 interviews were with local villagers but Joan also spoke with several sport fishing guides, state and federal managers, and recreational anglers from Bethel. She asked about the subsistence activities that are part of peoples' lives, what makes a good day on the river, differences between uses and expectations along the upper rivers vs the lower stretches of rivers, and a number of questions about conflicts with other users. The interviews were taped and transcribed for analysis, which will be completed in early 2002. The results of her study will be discussed in the CCP and with the planning team.

Joan was in Quinhagak for eight days in April, where

she interviewed 14 residents. In July she spent several days on the Kanektok with the Fish and Wildlife Service river rangers. A wide range of opinions was evident; some comments suggested that conflicts had lessened over the years while other people believed that substantial problems still existed.

Sources of conflict mentioned included boats anchoring in the middle of the river or getting too close to subsistence nets, too many boats on the river at certain times of the season, damage to fish from catch and release fishing, vandalism and trespass, noise pollution from air traffic, bear habituation, and the lack of use of honey buckets and threats to water quality.

Some of the conflicts were actual, on-river impacts while some were value or cultural conflicts, caused by different perceptions of appropriate behavior or conditions on the river.

In Goodnews Bay from May 7 – 10, Joan first met with the Traditional Village Council, where she talked about her study. Several issues were brought up during the meeting including: motor size (this was the most important); water quality; trash; and shortening the



*Beaver pond along the Upper Goodnews River (North Fork)*

season for drifters and river lodges.

These issues also emerged when she conducted seven interviews with locals, with the emphasis on the impacts of boat/motor sizes and speeds on the lower river, downstream from the Togiak Refuge boundary. Concerns focused on the safety of river travelers but also on effects on fish habitat and bank erosion. Another comment was that sport users and subsistence users are occupying the same place at the same time and competing for the same fish.

During her June 4 – 7 visit to Togiak, Joan first met with several members of the council before conducting 14 interviews. Again, there was a diversity of opinions about conflict; some people thought

there weren't any large problems. Others said they have to travel farther upriver because sport use is displacing them downstream.

One concern was local people starting to lease their native allotments to sport users. Another perceived threat was introduced contaminants in the water (due to sport use of the river). A comment heard in all three villages was that if people feel like agencies are not listening to them they stop voicing concerns.

Many of the people interviewed suggested a number of ways to address the conflicts or impacts identified. One recurring theme was working together and increasing communication between locals and non-locals; another was educating all groups

involved in conflicts.

Many local residents also suggested a number of ways to limit the impacts of sport use. Some of their ideas are already reflected in the issue statements and preliminary alternatives presented in this newsletter. Once Joan's analyses are completed, we will have a valuable source of new information to incorporate into the Togiak Refuge plan revision, and will make it available on our planning web site.

### Recreational Fishing Study Update

This season the Togiak Refuge conducted a study of sport anglers visiting the Kanektok, Goodnews, and Togiak rivers. The study was similar to a survey conducted for the Refuge in 1995, so we will be able to compare responses with the experiences and perceptions of anglers six years ago.

In contrast to the subsistence study, which involved informal interviews, the angler study consisted of a questionnaire mailed to guided and non-guided anglers whose names we obtained either on the river, at the Dillingham airport, or from guides.

The survey was mailed out regularly over the summer and fall so anglers would receive it soon after their trip while the experience was still fresh in their minds.

The rate of response appears excellent, over 70 percent, reflecting the strong interest anglers have regarding the rivers and their management. Received responses from residents of 43 different states and several foreign countries.

Once a draft report is available (early winter 2001/2002) we will make it available on the planning web site as well as summarize key findings in newsletters and incorporate them into the plan revision. Using the survey results will ensure that recreational anglers concerns are understood and communicated to all involved, giving them a strong voice at the table.

Most anglers place a high value on the fishing opportunities on the Kanektok, Goodnews and Togiak rivers, and believe that these rivers offer a type of fishing trip that is special and unique to Alaska and America.

Many express a desire to learn more about history and culture of the people who live in and around the Togiak

Refuge.

Detailed responses and analysis will be available later, but we did select a few representative responses to the question "Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your trip or how you feel the river should be managed in the future?"

*"Alaska is a paradise, I have made many visits, floating rivers, hunting, sightseeing, fishing local streams, etc. and I have yet to have a negative experience. Alaskans should be very proud of their state and strive to maintain its "last frontier" status and primitive environment."*

*"I am pleased to learn that someone is showing interest in one of the last (as yet) unspoiled environments on U.S. territory. A couple of years ago we fished the lower Kenai in a drift boat and it was combat fishing at its worst. At one time I counted over 100 boats within my viewing area. Without limits, at some point in the future, we can expect to see that same situation on the Kanektok and other now remote rivers in Alaska."*

*"Currently I believe the system is being managed properly. I would keep a*



*close watch on the King season however. Years ago we would fish the lower river and be able to move from gravel bar to gravel bar without much fear. Now you're almost afraid to move once you find a spot, for fear that if you leave and can't find another gravel bar to fish when you return, someone will have taken your original spot. It's not combat fishing, but it's not what you expect when you pay to go to a remote fishing hole in Alaska!"*

*"Private float trip traffic was increased since my last trip on the river 10 years ago. My major concerns are human waste and unethical fishing practices. The rainbow fishery must be protected and the natives must be assured of clean water."*

*"This was the best trip I've taken. Highlights were: number and disposition of bears; low use in wilderness area; lack of evidence of human trash/ litter; other wildlife encounters- caribou, beavers, loons, ducks, etc.; quality of fishing. I would support limiting unguided float trips if needed to maintain this, but only if there was a technical basis for the number selected."*



*Some anglers fish from motorized craft, while others float Refuge rivers in rafts.* USFWS

### **Kanektok Water Quality Study Update**

Maintaining water quality is one of the purposes for which the Togiak Refuge was established under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The issue of how to monitor and maintain or improve water quality within the Togiak Refuge, and especially on the Kanektok, has been identified through several Togiak Refuge planning efforts and public meetings.

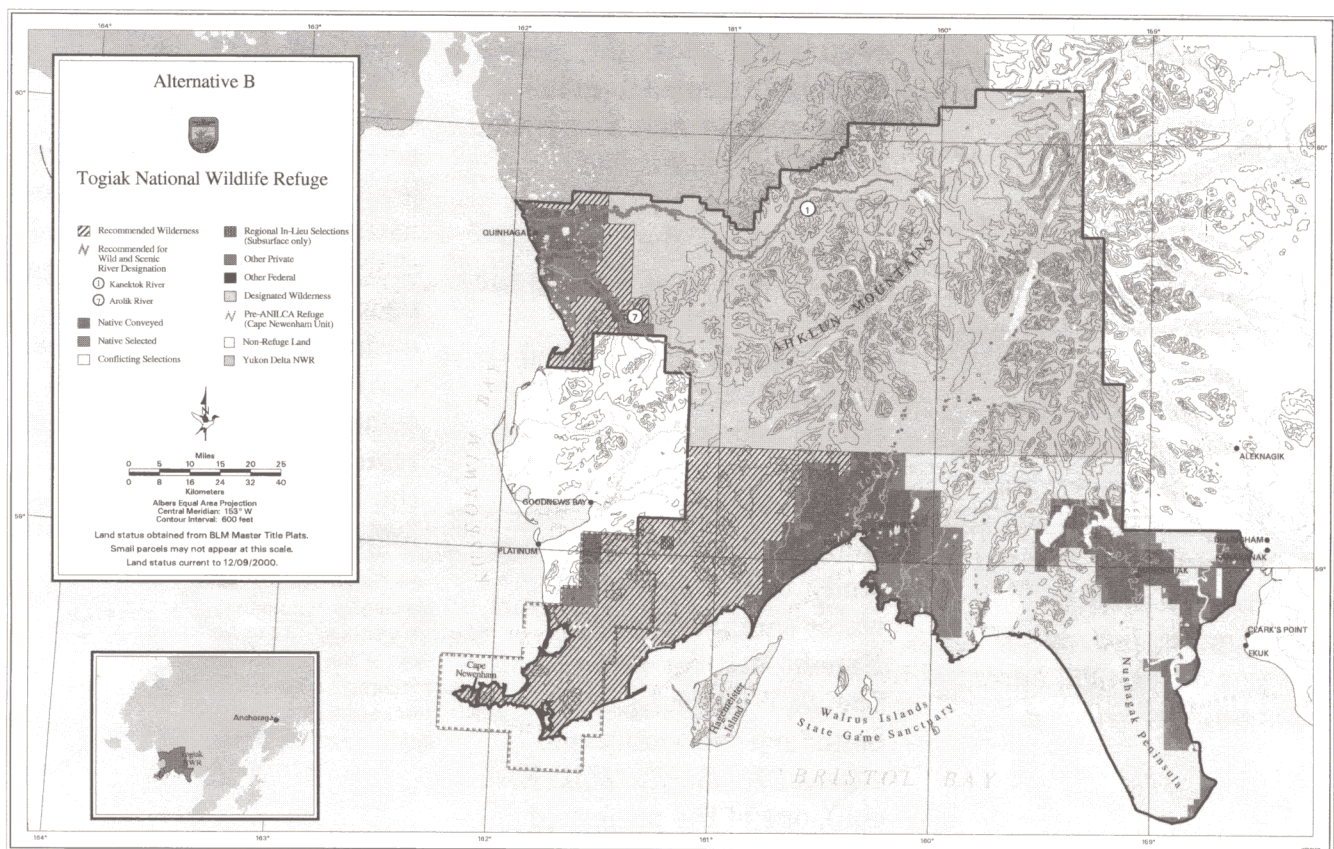
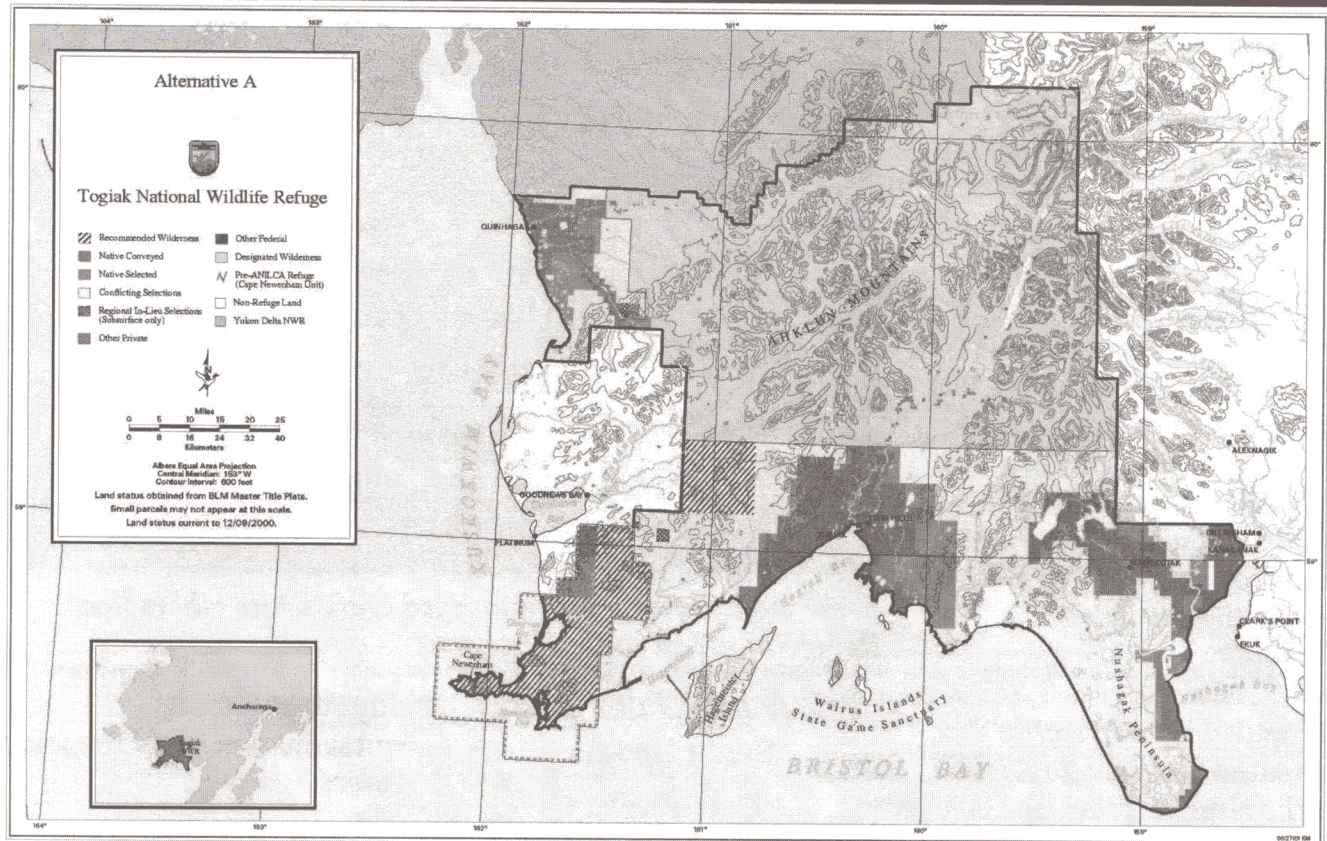
This summer, the Togiak Refuge began a preliminary study, collecting several water samples from the Kanektok River at the Togiak Wilderness Area boundary to identify and assess *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), one of the preferred

indicators of fecal contamination in recreational waters.

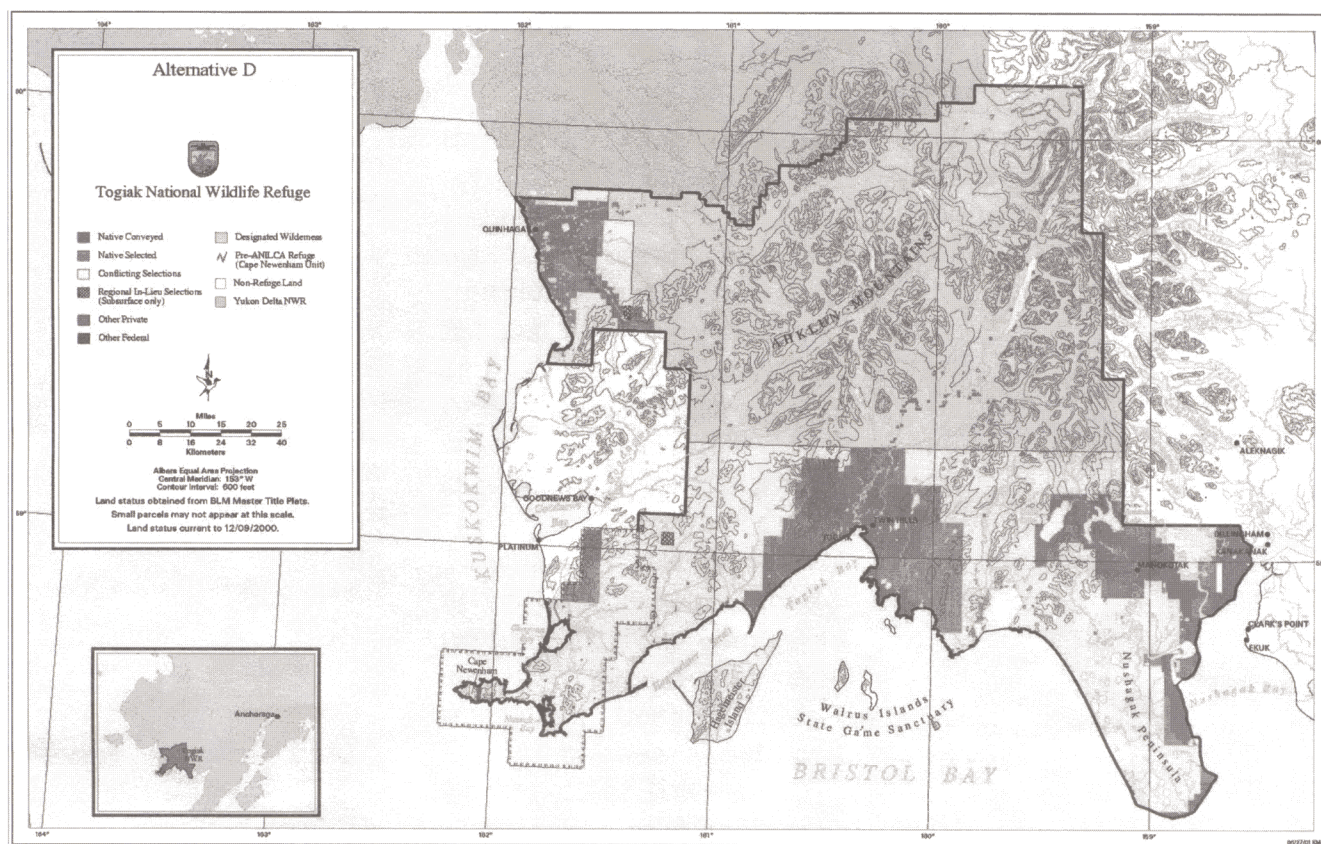
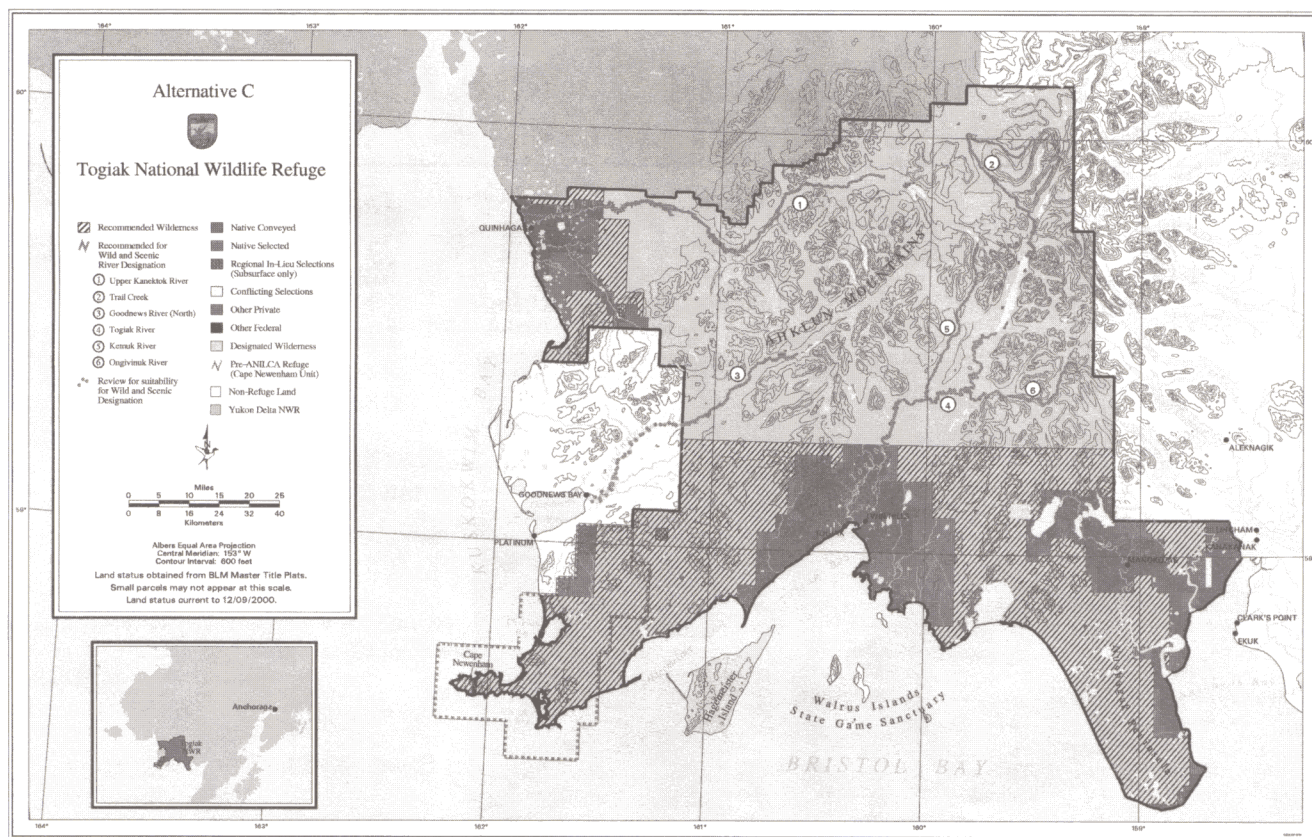
Preliminary results indicate that the levels of E. coli in the Kanektok River upstream from the Wilderness area boundary are within acceptable limits, and are at levels which can and do occur naturally. While it is possible that these bacteria are from people, they could just as easily be from bears, moose, caribou or other wildlife. A complete explanation of the results will be discussed in the draft environmental impact statement.













## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# Togiak National Wildlife Refuge

## Planning Update *Fall 2001*

### How to contact us:

You can contact the planning team leader or the refuge manager with comments or questions. You can reach us by email at:

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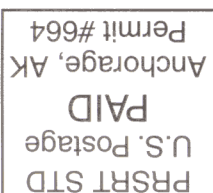
**Tribal representatives can also be contacted through the tribal councils.**

### New Listserver

A listserver provides subscribers, with electronic notices when an Alaska Refuge Manager initiates a compatibility determination and information on how you can comment. Email notices will be sent when determinations are completed with information on how obtain a copy.

To subscribe sending an e-mail with the word **subscribe** in the **Subject** line of the message to:  
[fws-akrefugecompatability-request@lists.fws.gov](mailto:fws-akrefugecompatability-request@lists.fws.gov) .

If you need additional help in subscribing or have questions about the Refuge Compatibility Statements listserver, please e-mail:  
[George\\_Constantino@fws.gov](mailto:George_Constantino@fws.gov). Please review our [privacy](#) statement before subscribing



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## Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Response Sheet, Fall 2001

*The Fall, 2001 Planning Update asks for your comments on preliminary alternatives. You may use this response sheet to provide comments if you choose. To be most helpful, please respond by **December 17, 2001**. Thanks for your help!*

1. The update describes four preliminary alternatives-different approaches we could take to managing the Togiak Refuge over the next 10-15 years (one of the four would continue existing management direction). Do you have any suggestions for changes to any of the alternatives and how they address issues facing the Refuge?
2. The preliminary alternatives contain a number of possible actions for managing recreational use on the Goodnews, Togiak, and Kanektok Rivers. Do you have any comments on these actions?
3. The preliminary alternatives contain a range of options for recommending that parts of the Refuge be designated as Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers. Do you have any ideas about these recommendations or how they're described?

4. Do you have any other comments or questions that we should answer in our next Update?

Thanks for your help!



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